

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

September 27, 2009

Romans 7--4

Romans 7:17-18 “So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.”

In my mind verse 17 is the real clincher in proving that Paul is not speaking of the condition of a Christian. In verse 17 Paul says that sin dwells within him. We know that the Holy Spirit dwells within the Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19). This is not to say that a Christian never finds sin within on occasion. However, think of our own homes and a thief breaking in to steal from us. Obviously, that thief is an anomaly. He doesn't belong in our homes and he should not be in our homes. His very presence and intention in our home marks him as an intruder, and invader. So is sin to the Christian. When it comes in it does so as an intruder and is not permitted to stay and establish a dwelling place. Rather, it is dealt with immediately upon detection (1 John 1:6-9; Acts 8:22). Having said all of this, Paul says that the sin he is speaking of is a “**sin that dwells within me.**” Because sin does not dwell within the Christian, Paul cannot be speaking of his life as a Christian.

Occasionally someone will take this verse and drag it out of context to use it as an excuse for sinning. They base it on the argument that they simply cannot help themselves, that there exists some inner compulsion that is driving them to sin. While it is true that the non Christian is a slave to sin, it is equally true that he is responsible and answerable for every one of his actions. The one who is honest with Paul's words will be forced to admit that Paul certainly realized, even after he sinned, that he was culpable for such acts and needed deliverance lest he perish.

In verse 18 Paul states “**nothing good dwells within me.**” The word “good” here is *agathos* and means “beneficial, helpful.” He means that there is nothing helpful within him to control the sin problem. In these two verses Paul has differentiated between his inner man, “I,” and his outer man, “me.” That he was conscious of his sin shows that the Law did exactly what it was designed to do. Continuing to speak of the man under the Law, Paul is saying that the Law gave no help with the sin problem, neither was there anything in his physical body that offered him aid in resisting temptation and sinful desire. Paul certainly was able to *desire* to do what was right, he just could not carry it out on a consistent basis. Only Jesus Christ had such absolute and total control over his mind and body to cause him to habitually desire and do right. Under the Law, Paul did not yet have that.

“Nothing good dwells within me” is another decisive statement in this passage to determine whether this is Paul the Jew or Paul the Christian under consideration. A simple question should go far in helping us to arrive at the correct answer. Could Paul the Christian, or any Christian, truthfully say that *nothing* good dwells within them? Having received the gift of the Holy Spirit at their baptism (Acts 2:38) and having the Holy Spirit dwell within them currently (1 Corinthians 6:19) that answer is obviously “No.”

In verse 19 Paul says, **“For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.”** This verse is essentially a repetition of verse 15. Again, this cannot truthfully be said of a Christian. Of himself as a Christian Paul said, **“You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers”** (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

As I stated when we first began this series on Romans 7:7-25, my experience has shown that the majority of Christians have assumed that Paul was speaking of himself as a Christian throughout these verses. I believe that the context of this passage along with the general teaching of the New Testament concerning the Christian and sin creates inescapable difficulties for such an understanding. It is possible that as you have read these articles you have seen an explanation of these verses that you have never heard or considered before. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to bring them to me. Paul does write some difficult things (2 Peter 3:15-16), but with patience and study we’ll figure it out together!

In Need of Prayers	In Need of Prayers
<p>Sharon Tirey continues her cancer treatments.</p> <p>Keep Kristen Osterling and her baby boy in mind as he continues to go through some difficulties.</p> <p>Remember David Blakeman.</p> <p>Lilly Fitzwater (Bill Morelan’s mother) is recovering in a care facility in Ohio. The contact information is posted on the bulletin board in the hall.</p> <p>Chuck McDavitt is suffering with diabetes and has now had to have both of his feet amputated.</p> <p>Ron Catchen had open heart surgery earlier in the year but recently had to have stints put in.</p>	<p>Randy Blackaby, has returned home and is recovering.</p> <p>Rachel Knollman’s MRI came back normal.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University Height Church of Christ 445 Columbia Avenue Lexington, Ky 40508 859-255-6257 www.uheightschurch.com</p>